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WCC Visits Alpine Communities Isolated by Floods

Representatives of the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches succeeded last week-end in reaching a community isolated in the remote district of Le Queyras (France) in the High Alps near the Italian border. For more than a week farmers, forest workers and miners had been cut off from land communications with the nearest towns. The severe flooding of their valley had broken down bridges and swept away roads. Villages have been partly demolished. Many houses still left standing are filled with rocks and silt as high as their second floor windows. The French government has been sending in supplies by helicopter and using military units to re-establish road links with the town of Briançon in a nearby valley.

The party from the WCC, led by Dr. Laszlo Ledermann, was among the first permitted to travel through the blocked valleys and over the pass. They arrived by jeep just as Sunday morning worship was commencing in the small village of Brunissard and were greeted by Pastor Jacques Cadier and Pastor Bernard Gentil. Cadier, an ex-ski champion of France, has been a leader in improving farming methods and building tourist facilities in the stricken area. Gentil, a farmer-pastor, who has encouraged his parishioners to remain in the snowy and difficult pastures of Le Queyras, has established a model farm, now inundated by glacial silt and made half-unworkable.

Two Protestant families out of a total estimated Protestant community of 300 people have lost their homes and possessions as a result of the flooding. The land of many more has become wholly or partly unworkable. The main road to the town of Gap, where the farmers sell their produce, has been swept away for some miles. Restoration of the district's economic lifeline will be impossible before the coming long winter, and it is feared that two other roads cannot be put in order in time to save the valley from total isolation when the winter's snow comes.

Pastor Cadier and Pastor Gentil asked the World Council of Churches to try to arrange immediate financial aid to help rehabilitate two dispossessed Protestant families. The WCC's Division of Inter-Church Aid is conferring with the French Reformed Church to discover the best way of rehabilitating the community, and of dealing with a request made by the pastors for a bulldozer that can be used by the



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Protestant community to aid the worst affected farmers. The local pastors have also asked aid through the sending of a small team of volunteer farmers from other churches during August and September to help restore fields to productivity.

The World Council's action in sending representatives to Le Queyras is paralleled in Italy, where Dr. Edgar Chandler, associate director of the WCC's Inter-Church Aid Division, and Miss Betty Richardson of Church World Service USA have been on the spot to establish the fact that Waldensian Protestants in the high valleys of Piedmont have also suffered serious loss of crops. However, the gravest situation in Italy exists in the delta of the River Po and the Pietenza, where 100,000 people are deprived of livelihood by the disasters. Requests have gone to Church World Service for 1000 blankets and one thousand dollars worth of cattle feed. Twenty thousand pounds weight of clothing from a warehouse in Rome have been used and will be replaced.

E.P.S., Geneva

ARGENTINA

Protestants Seek Repeal of Compulsory Registration

The Federation of Protestant Churches of Rio de la Plata has appealed to the government of Argentina to withdraw a decree passed in 1948, providing for compulsory registration of non-Roman Catholic religious worship.

The Federation has told the government that the government file drawn up as a result of the decree "instead of being a means of information, is in practice a means of supervision". Affirming that request for a repeal did not imply refusal to give statistical information to the competent authorities, the request declared: "We have nothing to conceal; our churches keep their doors open to all who wish to enter them, and it will give us the greatest satisfaction if our fellow-citizens know us and know our doctrines."

Receiving the appeal, the Under-Secretary for Religion in the Ministry of External Relations and Religion referred it to the Ministry for Home Affairs, with the request that the situation be clarified in the light of guarantees of religious liberty under the new constitution drawn up by the provisional Argentinian government following the revolution of 1955.

The Protestant Federation has withheld action to seek definite repeal until now in view of the preoccupations of the provisional government. E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED KINGDOM

Conference Asks for More Honest Religious Films

An international conference on "Film in the Church" closed on June 21 at Swanwick, England, with a plea for more honest religious films and greater use of commercial films in the churches.

The conference, which opened on June 16, was the largest ever held for continental and British film workers. During the "workshop" 110 delegates from 17 nations reviewed films produced in various countries and discussed such subjects as use of equipment, filmstrips, religious films, international exchange of equipment and entertainment films.

Reports presented at the final session said that some religious films show Christian faith and life to be too easy. "There is too much sunshine," one delegate said. "Other films are hypocritical," stated the report. They show the Christian taking pride in his goodness, as distinct from the badness of the non-Christian. Still other films can only be described as dishonest."

The group suggested standards for judging religious films, saying the films "should be true to the Biblical facts and to Christian experience and should present an idea that demands a response".

The conference urged greater use of commercial films in churches, "because they give us our best chance to make an impact on those outside the church". During the conference, selected films were shown, illustrating how their Christian implications could be presented.

The help of the World Council of Churches through the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs was asked so that religious films could be circulated duty-free between nations.

J. Arthur Rank, well-known British film-maker, opened the conference. He recalled that in the more than 20 years since he made his first film, times had changed, and techniques had been improved and developed. But, he said, "the message and witness we are called upon to give remain the same. It is the message of God's love and redemption and I have proved by experience that films can bring people to a realisation of those great truths. Here we are in an atomic age, yet many of our church leaders are approaching modern problems with out-of-date magic lantern methods and minds."

Six groups sponsored the conference. They were the Information Department of the World Council of Churches, the United Bible Societies, World Committee for Christian Broadcasting, International Inter-Church Film Centre, Christian Cinema and Religious Film Society and the World Council of Christian Education and Sunday School Association.
E.P.S., Geneva

SWITZERLAND

Protestant Churches Hold Annual Federation Meeting

The annual national assembly of the Swiss Federation of Protestant Churches, meeting recently in Geneva, heard reports from its executive council about steps taken during the year to urge the Swiss government to make provision in Swiss law for the rights of conscientious objectors to military service.

Other actions taken by the assembly, which was chaired by Pastor R. Vollenweider of Basle, included a decision to give financial support to the Protestant pavilion being erected by the Belgian churches at the 1958 Brussels Universal Exhibition. Half a million francs (\$116,823) will be raised by the Swiss churches in 1957-58 for aid to churches in need and refugees. An attempt to persuade the Swiss federal government to set aside the annual public holiday known as the "national fast" for a collection to help in underdeveloped areas of the world, was reported as unsuccessful, but the local churches in the Swiss cantons will be encouraged to make their own plans for collections along these lines. The Canton of Neuchâtel has already decided to go ahead.

The assembly refused a request to consider establishing an international Protestant radio transmitter in Switzerland.

A statement on atomic energy issued by the meeting reads:

"The assembled delegates of the Swiss Federation of Protestant Churches, knowing the world's destiny to be in God's hands, call the Swiss people not to let themselves be seized by panic. They remind the nation that peace will never be guaranteed by threats or fear, but only by the rule of law and by solidarity.

"Since 1950, constrained by its responsibility in the Gospel and towards its member churches, the Federation of Churches has several times drawn attention to the danger involved for humanity in the continuance of atomic bomb tests.

"The Federation thanks the Swiss Federal cabinet for its vigilance and urges it to intervene whenever opportunity offers to ensure that atomic power should under no circumstances be used for the destruction of humanity.

"The assembly also asks all those responsible for our national life to do their utmost for peace between peoples and not to do anything that might harm it.

"Convinced that the Lord of the Church will carry out his purposes in all circumstances, the assembly calls upon its members to intercede unceasingly for the peace of the world."

E.P.S., Geneva

In Brief

"This Age of Crisis", a special 40-page refugee number of "World Communiqué", the official publication of the World Alliance of YMCAs, provides a factual and pictorial review of the last forty years of the refugee problem. Prefaced by an appeal from twenty-six Nobel prizewinners, and illustrated by a large collection of dramatic photographs, the new publication is the result of collaboration between intergovernmental and voluntary agencies working for refugees. It appears in connection with the conference of "The Refugee Problem Today and Tomorrow" recently held in Geneva and can be ordered in quantity or single copies from the World Alliance of YMCAs or WCC Information, Geneva.

* *

Two theological commissions within the work of the World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order met at Overveen, Netherlands, in June. The Commission on Ways and Meaning of Worship, chaired by Dr. Kenneth Riches, Anglican Bishop of Lincoln, studied questions of sacrifice, symbol and myth in Christian worship. The Commission on Christ and the Church, with Bishop Anders Nygren of Lund, Sweden, in the chair, has prepared a paper on Baptism and Christian Unity for submission to the full WCC Faith and Order Commission at Yale University, New Haven, in July.

* *

Under the general title "The Church in the House", the latest issue of "Laity", bulletin of the WCC's Department on the Laity, surveys British experiments in using the homes of parishioners as centres for evangelism. The first article, by Canon Ernest Southcott, deals with the writer's well-known "house church" experiment at Halton, Leeds, England.

* *

"Go into All the World" is the main theme for the second meeting of the World Council of YMCAs, to be held at Kassel, Germany, from July 4-12. The Council, in its new form, has been the executive of the World Alliance since its Paris Centennial in 1955 and includes 200 delegates from 33 member bodies. The meeting will be chaired by World Alliance president Charles D. Sherman of Liberia and is the first major meeting of the World Alliance to be held in Germany since 1909.

* *

Roman Catholic leaders in India have expressed disquiet to Prime Minister Nehru of India following announcement of the membership of his new cabinet. They draw attention to the fact that India's ten million Christians are unrepresented in the new cabinet of 13 members. The previous cabinet included a Christian, the Minister for Health, Mrs. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. * *

Dr. Billy Graham's Greater New York Crusade has been extended to July 21, three weeks beyond the date originally fixed for ending the Madison Square Garden meetings. The final meeting will probably be an open-air rally in the more extensive Yankee Stadium.

E.P.S., Geneva

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	Billy Graham Comes to New York	20
	Presbyterian Church in the USA Endorses Merger with United Presbyterian Church of North America	22
	American Baptist Convention Votes against Racial Discrimination	22
<u>U.S.S.R.:</u>	Moscow Patriarch Replies to German Leaders	1
	Patriarch of Moscow Answers Danish Bishops	5
	Baptists Report 15,000 Baptisms	10
	Reformed Church Groups Reported Active	22
<u>YUGOSLAVIA:</u>	WCC to Aid Hungarian Refugees in Yugoslavia	9

